

Archbishop Routhier Installed in McLennan Ceremony

Archbishop Henri Routhier, OMI, 67, was solemnly installed as Archbishop of Grouard-McLennan in a ceremony at St. John the Baptist Cathedral last Sunday.

The event marked the raising by Pope Paul of the former vicariate apostolic of Grouard to the status of an archdiocese in the formation of a new ecclesiastical province.

Grouped with the archdiocese are the diocese of Mackenzie-Fort Smith, Prince George and Whitehorse.

Archbishop Emanuele Clarizio, the new Apostolic Delegate to Canada, presided at the ceremony which was attended by 400 people, including Church and government leaders.

Among those present were: Archbishop Anthony Jordan, OMI, of Edmonton; Ukrainian Bishop Neil Savaryn, OSBM, of Edmonton; Bishop Francis J. Klein of Calgary; Bishop L.P. Lussier, C.Ss.R., of St. Paul; Bishop Paul Piche, OMI, of Mackenzie-Fort Smith, Bishop James Mulvihill, OMI, of Whitehorse; Gerald Baldwin, MP for Peace River; Roy Ellis, MLA for Grouard; and Gerald Diamond, president of the French-Canadian Association of Alberta.

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Also among the guests was Anglican Bishop Reginald Pierce of Athabasca, a longtime friend of Archbishop Routhier.

Archbishop Clarizio, who is on a coast-to-coast tour to visit the bishops of Canada, commented on the honors bestowed on Archbishop Routhier.

« It is a wonderful gesture by Pope Paul and marks the start of a new era for this part of Canada ».

He added that it was good to share in the feeling

of unity and belief in Christ marked by the gathering.

During the banquet that followed, Archbishop Routhier reviewed the work that has been done in the archdiocese since he was appointed there in 1945.

He thanked the many congregations of priests, sisters and brothers who have come to the Peace River area to do parochial work, to teach in the schools and to operate hospitals and nursing homes.

Looking to the future, he said his greatest apprehension is « the feeble recruiting of priestly and religious vocations ».

He suggested as a solution to the vocations crisis a « more intense holiness of life » to attract more young people to religious life.

The archdiocese now has five men preparing for the priesthood and two as lay brothers. Ten women are postulants or novices in sisters' communities.

« We trust in the innate sense of dedication of youth, if we can learn to seek them out » he said.

Archbishop Clarizio made an unscheduled stopover in the town of Peace River. He drove there from McLennan to take a plane for the return trip to Edmonton, but weather conditions caused a long delay in the flight.

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Archbishop Routhier was ordained in 1924 and taught for ten years at College St. Jean in Edmonton. For six of those years he was the rector of the college.

He was appointed provincial of the Oblate Fathers in the Peace River area in 1944. A year later, he was named a bishop and consecrated with Archbishop Jordan in 1945.

He succeeded Bishop Ubald Langlois as vicar apostolic of Grouard and has been spiritual leader of the large area for the last 22 years.

Reprinted from *The Western Catholic Reporter*, 28 September, 1967.